

# The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Alloplastic Breast Reconstruction Surgery: A Mono Centre Study

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## Abstract

According to the European Cancer Information System (ECIS) female breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed malignancy. More than 335,000 women in the European Union are considered to be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020 which is 13.3% of all cancer diagnoses in both genders and 28.7% among the cancer diagnoses in women. The mortality rate is 7.3% being the third leading cause of cancer death for both genders after lung and colorectal cancer. Increased incidence rates are estimated in the Nordic countries. In the United States around 268,000 cases of invasive breast cancer and 48,100 cases of ductal carcinoma in situ were estimated to be diagnosed among US women in 2019 and 41,760 of them to die.

**Keywords:** Texane • Breast reconstruction • Hospitalization • Endocrine therapy • Chemotherapy

## Introduction

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy occurring in women, the second most common malignancy in both genders and the third leading cause of cancer death for 2018 according to World Health Organization (WHO). Breast cancer constitutes a burden for both developed and developing world, while in developing world the new cases show an accelerated rise because of the modern lifestyle. Significant for breast cancer control and prevention is the awareness of the women with appropriate screening. If early diagnosed, complete cure is possible.

Breast reconstruction surgery after breast cancer surgery is a cornerstone for women who wish their chest and their breasts to look as natural as it used to be before. It is really important due to the fact that the psychological and physical impact after fighting with breast cancer is very big and often women show low self-esteem, uncertainty for the future, anxiety disorders, even depression, while the scars remind them of this journey. Breast reconstruction helps them overcome these obstacles, as they gain back their confidence, they feel powerful again and they can celebrate their victory against the breast cancer.

The new coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) started in Wuhan, in China, in December 2019 and was declared by the WHO as pandemic on 11 March 2020 and accounting until November 2020 more than 60 million cases and more than 1.4 million deaths. The pandemic has a heavy impact on hospitals and the health system in general and in many areas worldwide the medical care collapsed. Because of the coronavirus crisis, breast cancer care and especially breast cancer reconstruction surgery was impeded and most of the patients were afraid for their lives.

## Breast Reconstruction

One of the most important procedures that determine the final

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outcome in the surgical management of the breast cancer is the breast reconstruction. The burden that carries every woman who fights with breast cancer is heavy and an aesthetically good result improves the quality of life from the psychological point of view. Despite the advantages and the progress in this field, from recent data, only 43% of women who underwent mastectomy opted to do breast reconstruction.

## Conclusion

After the categorization of the patients according to the year they were first admitted to the hospital, the variance of the distribution is great into the years but the least patients were admitted during the pandemic period with 2020 (12 patients) and 2021 (2 patients). This contributes to the possible hypothesis of prioritization of the patients and the changes and restrictions in the healthcare units regarding the surgical procedures, in order to minimize the exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to prepare the hospital to face the increased needs of the pandemic and also maybe even the patients decided to wait for a breast reconstruction. The age variation ranges from 21 years old to 81 years old in the total sample with mean age the 50,96 years and greater incidence in breast cancer and breast reconstruction in the women who are older than 60 years old. In the pre-pandemic period, the mean age was 50,05 years and the patients' ages vary from 21 years to 74, but during the pandemic the mean age was increased to 57,21 years and the ages vary from 29 to 81 years old. This might be due to the priority that was given to the patients who were more in need of a mastectomy and breast reconstruction, while maybe the younger patients had the chance to be treated conservative and to postpone their surgery until the end of the pandemic. The hospitalization duration was decreased during the pandemic of COVID-19 with minimum the 3 days of hospitalization and maximum 21 days and also the times that the patients were admitted to the hospital were either one or two times compared to the pre-pandemic period that the hospitalization duration was ranging from 1 to 35 days and the times admitted to the hospital from 1 to 7 times. This is indicative for the limitation of the patients' admissions to the hospital in order to minimize the exposure to the virus and to avoid any possible infection.

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